

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Memorial Day
- KSH 150-year Anniversary
- KVH Volunteer Recognition
- Upcoming Events

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Kansas Vietnam Veteran Era Medal/Medallion



The Vietnam Era Veterans Medallion Program approved by the Kansas Legislature and signed by the Governor provides a Vietnam Era Medallion, Medal and a Certificate of Appreciation from the State

of Kansas to veterans who served on active duty in the United States military at any time between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975. Since passage of the bill, the agency has honored over 5,400 Vietnam Era veterans, and participated in 33 medallion ceremonies. The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office continues to receive inquiries and applications from veterans and their families wanting to know how a Vietnam Era veteran or their surviving family members can apply for the medal, medallion and certificate provided for by the State of Kansas.

Working with service organizations like the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Vietnam Veterans of America as well as many other interested community organizations, the agency has been able to honor and thank many of our Kansas Vietnam Era Veterans. The most recent of these events was in Paola, KS where 30 veterans were honored in a ceremony, including the families of two deceased members. Each of these individuals was honored in their community in front of an audience made up of community members, family and friends.

While the agency mails the majority of the Medal Medallions and Certificates to veterans, there is something special about recognizing and thanking these veterans at a ceremony in their community. Whether it is a large ceremony of 100 veterans, or a smaller ceremony at a local post, it is important to thank and recognize these veterans and thank them for their service.

These ceremonies can often times be emotional for these individuals. As one veteran said recently "When we came home to Kansas City, we got booed at the airport." While it does not

make up for what happened in the past, it does often times help heal old wounds. Legion Rider George Honn, guest speaker for the event in Paola, summed it up in his remarks when he said "Fifty-eight thousand Americans were killed during the Vietnam War. Many of the soldiers that did make it home are still fighting the after-effects of conflict, Agent Orange and many other things.

Many soldiers were welcomed home with hostility and indifference. Many felt lonely, even in a crowd of people. Some were refused service in restaurants. Some were met with protestors when getting off planes. This is no way to welcome home a soldier. These soldiers deserve our utmost respect. They should be welcomed home with parades, flags flying high and open arms.

Today, we take time to welcome home Vietnam soldiers from our community and surrounding areas." While it is long past due, the medal, medallion and certificate provided for by the State of Kansas is saying thank you to these veterans and reaffirming our respect for the sacrifices they made. While we cannot go back in time we can identify these individuals, thank them and move forward together.

If you or a veteran you know may be eligible, you can find the application at <http://kcva.ks.gov/docs/default-source/forms/vietnam-medallion---1.pdf?sfvrsn=6>. If your organization would like to schedule a medallion ceremony for the Vietnam Era veterans in your community, you can call (785) 296-3976 and we will be happy to guide you or your organization through the process.



Wayne Bollig, Deputy Director

Memorial Day



History

Memorial Day, also called Decoration Day, is a patriotic holiday in the United States... a day set aside for Americans to remember those who lost their lives in defense of their country.

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the country was in disarray. Families and lives were torn apart because of all the fighting and destruction that had occurred. It is believed that Memorial Day began when two Civil War veterans saw a woman and

her two children decorate the grave of a fallen soldier with flowers. The two veterans were so moved that they decided to decorate more graves with flowers. In 1868, General John A. Logan, Commander-In-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, ordered that the 30th day of May be designated for the purpose of decorating graves of the war dead. General James Garfield spoke at the first national observance of Memorial Day on May 10, 1868.

For 100 years after that, Memorial Day was celebrated as a day for remembering those who had lost their lives in American wars. In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a federal holiday by an Act of Congress (Public Law 90-363) and is observed the last Monday in May.

On Memorial Day, take time to remember those veterans who are no longer with us by joining us at one of our four State Veterans' Cemeteries.

Location

Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Dodge
Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at WaKeeny
Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Winfield
Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Riley

Time

11:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m.



Fort Dodge Memorial Day



WaKeeny Memorial Day

2015 KVH Volunteer Recognition Ceremony

The Kansas Veterans' Home celebrated the work done by KVH volunteers over the last year at our Volunteer Recognition Ceremony on April 23. This year we honored 108 volunteers for donation of over 2,000 hours.

The Top Hours recognition went again this year to Dorothy Malone, American Legion Auxiliary Representative to KVH. Ms. Malone started her service to KVH as soon as the Home was created by assisting in cleanup work at the site in 1999.

Over the years she has donated thousands of hours and led the charge on several volunteer organized events and activities including the American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop at KVH which involves coordinating donations and volunteers and working with KVH staff to secure a location and involve residents and their families each year.



Left to Right: Bruce Irwin, Evelyn Morris, Leona Reynolds, Inge Mitchell, Maggie Solomon, Susan Boyd



Left to Right: Donna Miller, Lloyd Miller, Shirley Booe, Pixie Black, Galen Herrenbruck, Dorothy Malone, Bruce Irwin

One group recognized this year were high school students who have an interest in pursuing a career in health care. Working with Winfield High School, KVH has students complete their community service hours as shadows for our Activity department. This provides us with extra hands for some projects and gives the students an up-close view of what work at a nursing home involves.

Opportunities for groups or individuals to volunteer time or support existing programs are waiting. If you are interested in joining the volunteer corps at KVH, please call us at 620-221-9479.

150-year Anniversary Celebration of Fort Dodge

To kick-off the 150-year anniversary celebration of Fort Dodge, members of the Dodge City Chamber of Commerce announced the theme to this years Dodge City Days event.

“Our theme this year will be a tribute to Fort Dodge,” chamber events coordinator Abby Elliott told the crowd. “We wanted to celebrate the history of Fort Dodge along with the Dodge City Days festival. Without Fort Dodge, there wouldn’t be Dodge City.

Fort Dodge was built in 1865 with it’s primary purpose being to protect the wagon trails along the Santa Fe Trail heading towards New Mexico. It was named Fort Dodge after Major General Grenville Dodge who ordered the fort to be built.

It ran for 17 years before it was deeded to the State of Kansas in 1890, making it the Kansas State Soldiers Home.



“The theme was an easy decision to make,” Elliott said. “We received a lot of input from community members to celebrate Dodge City Days and Fort Dodge together. The decision was a no-brainer.”



150-year Anniversary Celebration of Fort Dodge (continued)

Dodge City Days will be celebrating its 55-year anniversary as a festival.

Originally there were two festivals that took place in Dodge City, the Boot Hill Fiesta and the Dodge City Roundup. Then in 1960, community leaders decided to combine the two festivals. The Dodge City Days festival was born.

The first Dodge City Days was a three-day event and rodeo tickets went for 75 cents.

Dodge City Days is now a 10-day celebration that runs from July - August. This year's event dates are July 24 through August 2. It is the second largest community festival in Kansas and is well known throughout the nation.

The Dodge City Area Chamber of Commerce coordinates the festival year after year along with more than 200 volunteers. According to the Dodge City Days website, approximately 100,000 individuals attend at least one of the many Dodge City Days events generating \$3 million which has an economic impact of \$9 million for the City of Dodge City.

Closing out the theme announcement, members of the G.I. Forum donated an electric motorized Jazzy Sportz wheelchair to the residents of Fort Dodge.



Commandant and First Lady

For more information on Dodge City Days,
Visit their website at dodgecitydays.com or
[Facebook.com/dodgecitydays](https://www.facebook.com/dodgecitydays).



KCVAO Mobile Services

The KCVAO Mobile Offices are Ready to Assist!

The Kansas Enhanced Veteran Services Program is a proven outreach program that makes applying for federal and state benefits easier for veterans and eligible family members. The staff at Hays and Emporia have partnered with many organizations and businesses in the last four years to assist veterans all over the state. We have provided top-notch veteran advocacy at fairs, parades, sporting events, and other locations throughout the State of Kansas.



The Emporia Mobile Office at the Sprint Campus in Overland Park



Veterans Day Parade in Leavenworth

If you have questions, or if you would like to schedule one of our vans for your event, please call the Program Supervisor, Eric Rohleder, (785) 260-3100 or email westksvsp@media-net.net. You can also download the form at the link below and email, fax, or mail it to the address or number listed on the form.

Events are scheduled on a priority first-come, first-serve basis with the many dates scheduled at least 45-60 days in advance. However, the KCVAO will make every effort to participate in your event if the date is available.

[Mobile Services Office Request Form](#)

[Mobile Office Schedule](#)

VA Expands Choice Program Eligibility, Effective Immediately

VA Will Now Determine Eligibility Using Driving Distance

WASHINGTON – In order to expand eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it will determine eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program based on the distance between a Veteran's place of residence and the nearest VA medical facility using driving distance rather than straight-line distance. This change has been published in the [Federal Register](#) and is effective immediately.

"VA is pleased to announce the distance calculation change from straight-line to driving distance for the Veterans Choice Program," said Secretary Robert McDonald. "This update to the program will allow more Veterans to access care when and where they want it. We look forward to continued dialogue with Veterans and our partners to help us ensure continued improvements for Veterans' to access care."

The change from straight-line to driving distance roughly doubles the number of eligible Veterans. Letters are being sent to the newly eligible Veterans to let them know they are now eligible for the Veterans Choice Program under this expansion. If a Veteran does not remember receiving a Veterans Choice Card or has other questions about the Choice Program, they can call (866) 606-8198.

Effective immediately, VA is also changing the mileage calculation for beneficiary travel. The change will ensure consistency in VA's mileage calculations across the two programs. The beneficiary travel calculation will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route.

For more details about the department's progress and related information, see www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets_and_details.asp.



SPECIAL NOTICE:

If you are a veteran in emotional
crisis and need help

RIGHT NOW,

call this toll-free number
1-800-273-8255, available 24/7,
and tell them you are a veteran.

All calls are confidential.

VA Research Commemorates 90 Years of Health Care Innovation Focused on Improving Veterans' Lives

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs will highlight 90 years of improving the lives of Veterans and other Americans through medical and prosthetics research when it celebrates National VA Research Week May 18–22, 2015, at host medical facilities across the United States and its territories.

“VA Research and Development plays a pivotal role in improving the health of Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “In addition, the advances in health care developed by VA have benefited millions of other Americans and patients worldwide.”

As part of the nation’s largest integrated health care system, VA research has unique opportunities to address some of the most critical issues in health care today. During fiscal year 2015, nearly 3,400 VA researchers will work on more than 2,200 projects. In addition to VA funding, VA researchers compete for funding from the National Institutes of Health, nonprofit associations and private pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms.

VA medical centers across the nation will mark [VA Research Week](#) with special events such as tours of their research facilities, lectures, poster displays and luncheons to honor the Veterans who voluntarily participate in VA studies. The week-long activities will highlight current research, much of it focusing on Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, and using new technology in fields such as brain imaging, DNA sequencing and cell therapy. Another highlight of Research Week will center on [VA’s Million](#)

[Veteran Program](#), which aims to create one of the world’s largest databases of health and genetic information. To date, the program has enrolled some 350,000 Veterans.

Also in the spotlight will be [past accomplishments](#), such as the work of Nobel Prize recipient Dr. Andrew Schally, who received the award in 1977 for discoveries relating to hormones. Today, nearly four decades later, Dr. Schally is still an active VA researcher, studying cancer, diabetes and heart disease at the Miami VA Medical Center.



Veterans Health Administration
Research & Development
Improving Veterans' Lives — www.research.va.gov

“From the development of effective therapies for tuberculosis and implanta-

ble cardiac pacemakers, to the first successful liver transplant and the nicotine patch, VA’s trail-blazing research accomplishments are a source of great pride to VA and the nation,” said Dr. Timothy O’Leary, VA’s chief research and development officer. “The impact of VA research on Veterans’ lives stretches back to the 1920s, when researchers reported on studies looking at treatments for malaria, the long-term health effects of chemical warfare and mortality among Veterans with mental illness.”

To learn more about the work of VA researchers, past and present, visit www.research.va.gov. For more information on local and national events marking National VA Research Week, visit www.research.va.gov/researchweek

Veteran Services Adds New Service Representatives

It seems like Déjà vu all over again when it comes to our entry for this edition of the KCVAO newsletter. For the last year we have been introducing our newest veteran services representatives. One of the things that continues to reinforce what we have said all along is the extremely high caliber of people that we have had the honor of hiring to be advocates for one of the state's most valuable resources, Our Veterans! It truly takes a special kind of passionate individual to help fellow veterans. Let me take a few minutes to introduce a few more outstanding people In Ft Dodge, Hays, Hutchinson, Winfield and Manhattan.

Amber Elrod has been hired as the second veteran services representative (VSR) in the Hays Mobile Office. She is a transplant who originally hails from Jacksonville, North Carolina. She came to Kansas to complete her degree in Animal Science at Fort Hays State University and to serve in the Kansas National Guard. She is currently working on an advanced degree from Liberty University. Prior to her guard time, she was an active duty Army Intelligence Analyst. Amber's Assignments took her to Ft Hood, Texas as part of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 101st Airborne Division at Ft Campbell, Kentucky. She has multiple deployments under her belt and is a veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

She is an outdoor enthusiast and pretty much enjoys any outdoor activity including hiking and skydiving. She is single and loves being a "kid". Amber likes the travel that goes along with being a mobile VSR.

She is excited about helping veterans and family members apply for and receive benefits they didn't even know existed in the first place.

Mike Casquino was hired as the second VSR for the Hutchinson Field Office. You could say that Mike is somewhat of a transplant as he was born in the southern hemisphere in the beautiful city of Lima, Peru. His travels took him to Los Angeles then on to Hutchinson, Kansas in 2011. He attended Compton Community College prior to Joining the Army in 1998. He too was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He was attached to D co. 2/502nd Inf.

Regt. for almost seven years. Mike deployed to Kosovo (KFOR) in 2001 for peace a keeping operation, and to Iraq (OIF) in 2003 for war time operation.

Mike is married and has two children. He enjoys outdoors sports and working on small electronics. In his "spare" time, he is also the Post Commander at the VFW post 1351 in Hutchinson. Mike is self-motivated and self-driven. He has owned his own business since separating from the service. He believes in service to others especially to our Veterans. Mike knows, "we stand here because of them." That is the reason he accepted the job and he hopes he can do that that.



Dave Smith has been with the KCVAO since the beginning of the year and already he is settled in as the second VSR at the FT Dodge Field Office. He is a product of Tampa, Florida and then Colorado Springs, Colorado. He graduated high school in Colorado Springs in 1983 and immediately enlisted in the Army. Dave was initially an M.P. then an Infantry soldier. His assignments have taken him to Maryland, Korea, Texas, and Germany. He left the service 1989 and began his civilian career in law enforcement.

Dave moved to Kansas to begin his career and he ended up meeting and marrying his wife. Dave has an undergrad degree in Organizational Management and Leadership and recently completed the KU Certified Public Managers Course. He is a very strong supporter and active with the Kansas Special Olympics, having been involved with that organization since 1990 and serving on the state executive board for them organization for several years.

Dave feels that working for the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office is extremely rewarding. He goes on to reflect that, "My entire adult life has been dedicated to public service and helping people. This position allows me to continue in that capacity. I get to meet and help true heroes and their families every day."

Veteran Services Adds New Service Representatives (continued)

Jennifer “Jae” Grayson is our newest VSR in the Manhattan Field Office. She is originally from New Orleans, Louisiana. Her husband’s military assignments brought Jennifer to the Ft. Riley area in 2013. She attended high school in Louisiana and has a Bachelor’s Degree in Health Care Administration and a Master’s Degree in Information Systems from The University of Phoenix. Jennifer enlisted in the Army in 2001 and was assigned to Ft Benning, Georgia, Camp Casey, South Korea, and Dexheim, Germany. She states that “her military career made her grow up and taught her so many life lessons.”

Jennifer has a son and a daughter and strives to be the best mom she can be. She enjoys sewing when she can find the time and has been a team captain for the “Relay for Life” charity.

Jennifer feels that it is hard to put into words, however, for a veteran to shake her hand or to give her a hug for the selfless services that she has offered is by far the best part of her job. She exclaimed, “There can’t be a better job than this, and if there is, you can bet I’m not looking for it.”

It seems like **Clint Conklin** would be considered the well-seasoned VSR in this group of fine people having been in place as the second VSR in the Winfield Field Office since last October. He is originally from Bakersfield, California, his family relocated to Grenola, Kansas when he was a child, Clint graduated from Central High School in Burden, Kansas and joined the U.S. Army in 1982 as an Infantryman. He went on to become a Recruiter having earned his Gold Badge and 3 Sapphires and Recruiting Ring as one of the Army’s exemplary recruiters. He was also a US Army Career Counselor and he retired as a Master Sergeant on 2004.

Clint has three children and one grandchild. He spends much of his off duty time “Huntin” pretty much anything and he is an avid poker player playing whenever he gets the chance. He is also an active member of his local American Legion Post.

Clint really enjoys helping veterans and feels that most of our customers out there don’t know what we do or that there is help out there for them. He takes pleasure in navigating through the VA red tape. He enjoys diagnosing the veteran’s real issues and problems and deals with them accordingly. He feels that all of this makes being a VSR a very fulfilling and rewarding position.



Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office

700 SW Jackson, Suite 1004

Topeka, KS 66603

Phone: 785-296-3976

Fax: 785-296-1462

Website: <http://kcva.ks.gov/>

For Information on Admission and Eligibility for Kansas Veterans Home and the Kansas Soldiers' Home click on links below.

[Admission and Eligibility](#)

For more information about each nursing home click on link below

[Soldiers' Home](#)

The Mobile Delivery Program Mobile Office Schedule						
EVENT	DATES		HOURS		LOCATION	CITY
	FROM	TO	FROM	TO		
Heartland Military Day (E)	Jun 6	Jun 6	7 am	7 pm	KS National Guard Museum	Topeka
Gray Area Retiree Presentation (H)	Jun 6	Jun 6	9 am	3 pm	Wichita Readiness Center	Wichita
Alefs Veteran Appreciation Event (H)	Jun 20	Jun 20	11 am	5 pm	Alefs Harley Davidson	Wichita
Veterans Freedom Square Event (E)	Jun 20	Jun 20	10 am	6 pm	Memorial Hall	Independence
Sundown Salute (E)	Jul 2	Jul 5	12 am	8 pm	Memorial Park	Junction City
Flag Day Ceremony (H)	Jul 4	Jul 4	1 pm	7 pm	American Legion	Haviland
Barton County Fair (H)	Jul 9	Jul 13	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Great Bend
Washington Co Fair (E)	Jul 14	Jul 20	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Washington
Hodgeman County Fair (H)	Jul 16	Jul 20	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Jetmore
Cloud County Fair (H)	Jul 22	Jul 26	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Concordia
Riley County Fair (E)	Jul 24	Jul 28	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Manhattan
Graham County Fair (H)	Jul 27	Jul 29	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Hill City
Cherokee Co American Legion Free Fair (E)	Aug 5	Aug 9	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Columbus
Tri-Rivers Fair (H)	Aug 6	Aug 10	12 pm	9 pm	Fairgrounds	Salina
Kansas State Fair (H&E)	Sep 11	Sep 20	9 am	8 pm	Fairgrounds	Hutchinson
Mobility Rodeo	Oct 2	Oct 2	10 am	6 pm	Kansas Truck Mobility	Wichita